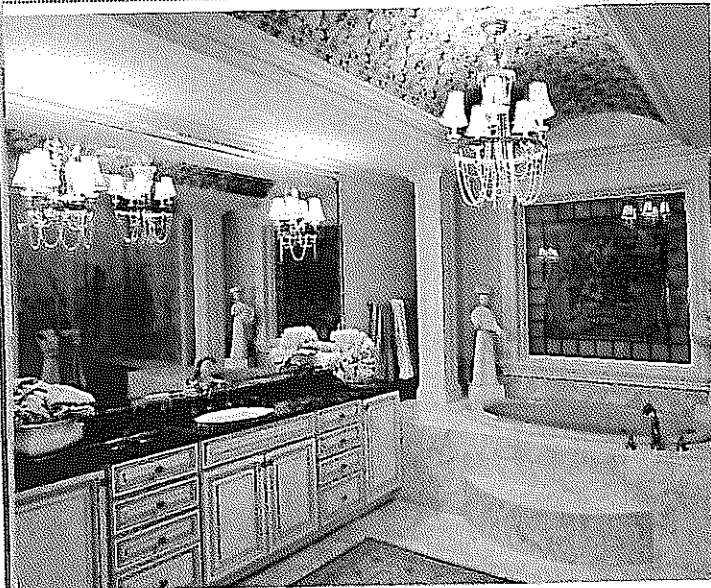


BRIAN SIMS

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Stepping into the role of home builder didn't happen overnight for Brian Sims, president of Rookwood Building Group. "I started working with my dad when I was 13 or 14," Brian says, describing how he honed such skills as exterior carpentry and framing while performing all aspects of constructing a home from start to finish. "I really enjoyed working. It was never forced on me."

After graduation from Sycamore High School and studying business at the University of Cincinnati, Brian took on more responsibilities in the family business. From the beginning, "I was up against the best (designers and builders)," he says. "I'm on the job sites at least once a day. You have to keep your hands on it and put your heart into it."

Brian credits this solid foundation to his father, plan designer Larry Sims, who started the company in 1984. "I learned the importance of a solid work ethic and attention to details," Brian says. "He's meticulous."

During many summer breaks, Brian observed Larry designing homes at his drafting table and visiting the home site as it was under construction for further inspiration. "He would get new ideas standing in our houses while they were being framed," Brian says of his dad. "Most of Rookwood's distinctive ceiling and soffit details can be traced back to this type of on-site attention."

As reminders of this legacy, the Rookwood office is also part museum—housing Larry's drafting table and many tools that built some of the original Rookwood homes.

Brian also acknowledges that a builder is only as successful as his staff. "There's no way I could do this alone," he says. "I have a small staff, but they're dedicated, talented and capable professionals."

Key Rookwood personnel include Danielle Marnocha, director of operations; Tony Clark, construction supervisor; Tim Hackman, general labor; and Gail Fogle, sales representative through Builder Resources.

At the end of the day, Brian can't imagine himself in any other profession. "I really enjoy the feeling of seeing the homeowners just thrilled to death when their home is ready. It's a great life. It really is."

Great enough to want his children to possibly follow in his footsteps? "It's like that's already happening. My 7-year-old, Matthew, is really artistic, just like my dad. And 5-year-old Joshua is fascinated by construction equipment. Ella is only 3-years old, but she just may be the next designer."

Brian resides in Chestnut Hill in a 2004 HOMEARAMA® home named after his daughter.—ROSE HUBER